United Nations E/AC.51/2013/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 February 2013

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-third session
Substantive session, 3-28 June 2013
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Programme questions: evaluation

Programme evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

"UNEP has achieved positive results in addressing a broad range of environmental issues but still needs to further focus its work programme and continue to strengthen internal processes and regional offices"

Summary

At its fifty-first session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for evaluation, for consideration at its fifty-third session, in June 2013. In its resolution 66/8, the General Assembly endorsed that selection.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) examined the relevance, effectiveness, impact and efficiency of UNEP using quantitative and qualitative methods, including a document review, interviews, surveys, focus groups, field missions, direct observation of internal meetings and intergovernmental forums and a meta-analysis of UNEP evaluation reports.

UNEP has achieved positive results in addressing a broad range of environmental issues but still needs to further focus its work programme and continue to strengthen internal processes and regional offices. Through products such as the Global Environment Outlook report series and the report *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, UNEP

* E/AC.51/2013/1.

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has facilitated access to timely and relevant science-based information on environmental challenges and contributed to policy changes and improvements to the environment. It has been critical to the development of global environmental norms and standards and has achieved positive results in building the capacity of national Governments, although the sustainability of the results has been uneven.

UNEP relied on partnerships with a wide range of entities as a key element in delivering its work programme. Partnerships were critical to enabling UNEP to overcome the limitations of its relatively small size, limited resources and sparse country presence. With regard to promoting the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, UNEP has achieved some positive results, in particular through the revitalization of the Environment Management Group. It has, however, been challenged by unclear and overlapping roles among United Nations entities. While the UNEP regional offices have been bolstered with additional resources and greater delegation of authority, UNEP has yet to respond adequately to member States' calls to strengthen the offices, which have still not reached their full strategic potential.

UNEP has become more results-oriented owing to significant investment in stronger planning and management processes. UNEP reform is continuing, but critical processes for programme focus, organizational accountability and resource allocation have been lagging behind. Further institutionalization of the UNEP reform process has resulted in strengthened focus on the medium-term strategy 2014-2017 and the programme of work 2014-2015.

Given the global environment, which continues to be threatened by negative trends and increasing risks, the effectiveness of UNEP is more critical than ever. Its normative and operational mandates should be discharged in a complementary, mutually supportive and cohesive manner — at the country, regional and global levels — to enhance the Programme's effectiveness. It is at the intersection of environmental normative and operational work that UNEP has the greatest comparative advantage and potential to make its most significant contribution.

OIOS recommends that UNEP:

(a) Address partnership gaps relating to partnership feedback and partnership cost-efficiency measurement identified in the evaluation;

(b) Develop a strategy for enhancing its capacity-building function;

(c) Further strengthen its regional offices;

(d) Establish clear and transparent criteria for allocating financial and human resources to activities in thematic priority areas;

(e) Finalize and implement the September 2012 draft terms of reference for subprogramme coordinators.

I. Introduction

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken in 2008. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the evaluation for consideration at its fifty-third session, in June 2013 (see A/66/16, para. 66). The General Assembly endorsed the selection in paragraph 6 of its resolution 66/8.

2. In accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the objective of the evaluation was to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, impact and efficiency of UNEP (see ST/SGB/2000/8, regulation 7.1).

II. Focus and methodology

3. The evaluation focused on the performance of UNEP since 2008, with the main data collection concluded by August 2012, although earlier years were considered in order to strengthen the analysis. It did not cover the monitoring and evaluation capacity of UNEP, which was the topic of an OIOS inspection in 2011 (IED-12-004).

4. The evaluation used the following quantitative and qualitative data-collection methods:

(a) Review of relevant documentation, including United Nations internal and public documents and external literature on UNEP;

(b) Review of monitoring and reporting information from the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System;

(c) Electronic survey of all UNEP Professional and higher-level staff. The survey (hereinafter the "UNEP staff survey") was conducted from 16 April to 1 June 2012. It was sent to 461 staff, 328 of whom responded (71 per cent response rate);

(d) Electronic survey of all 58 States members of the UNEP Governing Council. The survey (hereinafter the "Governing Council survey") was conducted from 16 May to 6 August 2012. Twenty member States responded (33 per cent response rate);[1]

(e) Eleven focus groups with UNEP staff and management;

(f) A total of 247 semi-structured interviews conducted in person or over the telephone with UNEP staff; member States; partners, including United Nations agencies; representatives of multilateral environmental agreement secretariats; representatives of scientific and private-sector organizations; and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Some interviews were undertaken during missions

[1] The low response rate limits the ability to draw generalized conclusions from the survey results. Throughout the present report, survey results were interpreted with similar evidence from other sources. The results from both surveys presented herein are calculated without "no opinion" responses.

to UNEP headquarters in Nairobi and offices in Bangkok, Brasilia, Geneva, New York, Panama City, Paris and Washington, D.C.;

(g) Direct observation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, a UNEP town hall meeting, a UNEP senior management retreat and a meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP;

(h) Meta-analysis of a non-random sample of 30 of 62 UNEP terminal project evaluation reports completed in 2008-2011;[2]

(i) Review of 21 external reviews, audit reports and evaluations of UNEP.

All analyses were triangulated with data from multiple sources to strengthen the evaluation results.

5. An external advisory panel, comprising three internationally recognized experts on the environment, reviewed the terms of reference for the evaluation, data-collection instruments and the draft report.

6. OIOS consulted UNEP during the conduct of the evaluation and expresses thanks to it for its cooperation and assistance. The annex to the present report sets out the UNEP response to the draft report.

III. Background

History and mandate

7. UNEP was established by the General Assembly in 1972 in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) to promote international cooperation in the field of environment and to recommend, as appropriate, policies to that end, and to provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of the environmental programmes within the United Nations system. The UNEP mandate has evolved with subsequent decisions of the Governing Council:

(a) The Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, adopted by the Governing Council in its decision 19/1, declared UNEP the principal United Nations body in the field of the environment and the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environment agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment;

(b) In its decision SS.VII/1, on international environmental governance, and its appendix, known together as the "Cartagena package", the Governing Council called for strengthening the role, authority and financial situation of UNEP; strengthening the science base of UNEP; improving coordination and coherence between multilateral environmental agreements; and enhancing coordination and cooperation across the United Nations system, including through the Environment Management Group;

[2] The sample was selected on: (a) balance between GEF-funded and non-GEF-funded project evaluations; (b) project completion date; (c) geographical representation; (d) balance between country and multi-country projects; and (e) UNEP subprogramme representation.

(c) In the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, adopted by the Governing Council in section I of its decision 23/1, UNEP was requested to enhance delivery of technology support and capacity-building and strengthen cooperation among UNEP, multilateral environmental agreement secretariats and other bodies engaged in environmental capacity-building.

8. In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development invited the General Assembly to adopt a resolution strengthening UNEP by establishing universal membership in the Governing Council, enhancing the ability of UNEP to fulfil its coordination mandate within the United Nations system and empowering it to lead efforts formulating United Nations system-wide environmental strategies.

9. According to its medium-term strategy 2010-2013 (UNEP/GCSS.X/8), which was approved by the Governing Council in its decision SS.X/3, UNEP has interpreted its mandate to comprise five overall, interrelated areas:

(a) Keeping the world environmental situation under review;

(b) Catalysing and promoting international cooperation and action;

(c) Providing policy advice and early warning information, based upon sound science and assessments;

(d) Facilitating the development, implementation and evolution of norms and standards and developing coherent interlinkages among international environmental conventions;

(e) Strengthening technology support and capacity in line with country needs and priorities.

Governance and structure

10. UNEP is governed by the General Assembly through the Governing Council. A subsidiary organ, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, monitors and facilitates the implementation of decisions of the Council.

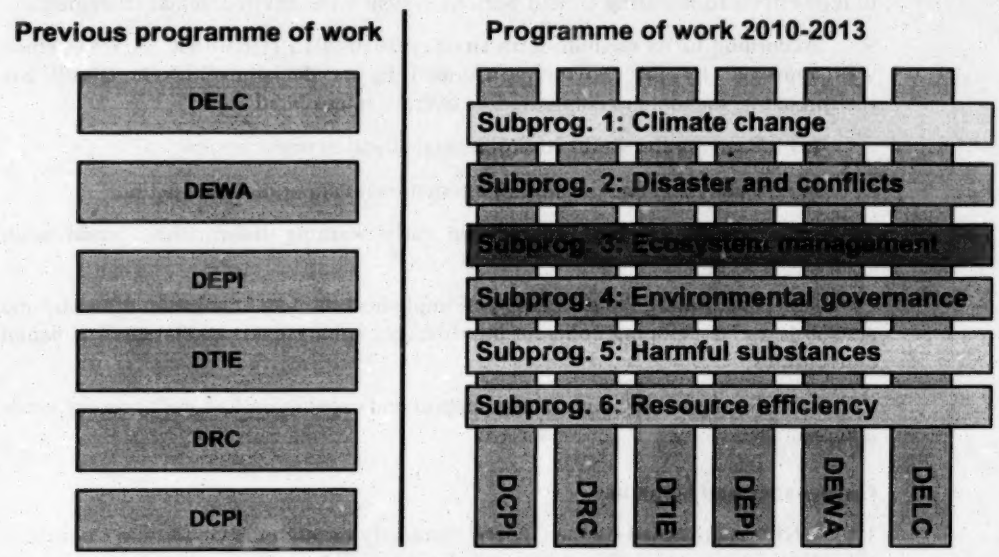
11. UNEP comprises six divisions, an executive office, six regional offices, seven liaison and country offices and five scientific advisory groups. It also provides secretariat services to eight multilateral environmental agreements.[3] As at 31 December 2011, UNEP (without including the multilateral environmental agreements and conventions that it administers) employed 834 staff members, 48 paid from the United Nations regular budget, 454 from the Environment Fund, 155 from trust funds directly supporting the UNEP programme of work, 53 from counterpart contributions, 75 from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund and 49 from the Special Account for Support to Trust Funds.

[3] The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals; the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.

Organizational and management reform

12. During 2006-2007, UNEP went through organizational change to become more focused on results and deliver as one UNEP. Notably, the medium-term strategy 2010-2013 replaced division-specific work organized along functional lines with cross-cutting subprogrammes in six thematic priority areas to be implemented in a matrix structure (see figure I).

Figure I
UNEP matrix structure



Source: Adapted from the formative evaluation of the UNEP programme of work 2010-2011 carried out by the UNEP Evaluation Office in 2011.

Abbreviations: DELC, Division of Environmental Law and Conventions; DEWA, Division of Early Warning and Assessment; DEPI, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation; DTIE, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics; DRC, Division of Regional Cooperation; DCPI, Division of Communications and Public Information.

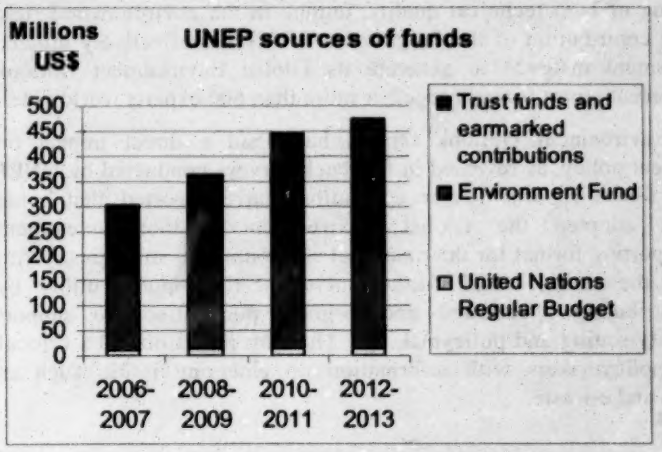
13. The new structure and the medium-term strategy were designed to harness specialized sector expertise across divisions, eliminate duplication and a silo approach to programming and budgeting, introduce a new approach to results-based programming and increase coherence with UNEP work funded by GEF. All UNEP divisions work across the six subprogrammes, with some divisions taking the lead on one or more. In its medium-term strategy 2014-2017, UNEP plans to introduce a seventh subprogramme, on environment under review.

14. The strategic presence policy adopted in 2009, as set out in the medium-term strategy 2010-2013, shifts UNEP resources towards activities that respond to regional and country needs. Strategic directives were developed to strengthen the UNEP presence in the regions and partnerships for increased programme delivery on the ground.

Budget

15. The total projected resources for UNEP in 2012-2013 amount to $474 million, an increase of 57 per cent over three bienniums, as illustrated in figure II. This growth has largely been driven by expansion in trust funds and earmarked contributions (88 per cent growth). The Environment Fund has grown by 32 per cent and the regular budget 8 per cent.

Figure II
UNEP funding sources, 2006-2013



Source: UNEP/GC/24/9, UNEP/GC/25/12 and UNEP/GC/26/13.

16. In addition, as a GEF implementing agency, in the fiscal year 2011 UNEP received $289 million and implemented 85 GEF projects,[4] more than double the $125 million that it received in 2008-2009 (see A/65/5/Add.6).

IV. Evaluation results

A. Keeping the world environmental situation under review

UNEP has facilitated access to timely and relevant science-based information on key environmental challenges and opportunities

17. UNEP has been effective in achieving its mandate to keep the world environmental situation under review and to ensure that emerging environmental problems receive consideration by Governments. Science has played a key role in the delivery of this mandate. In the past two bienniums, UNEP adopted a science strategy and established the position of Chief Scientist to bolster its science-policy interface.[5] It strengthened the credibility of its numerous scientific assessments,

[4] UNEP annual monitoring review of GEF-supported projects implemented by UNEP (2011).

[5] According to the UNEP science strategy 2011-2013, the science-policy interface includes identifying scientific issues of policy importance, using scientific methods to illuminate policy challenges, assessing and communicating scientific knowledge to policymakers and convening scientists.

monitoring and early warning outputs, making them more rigorous and catalytic. It stepped up its collaboration with scientific panels, including the International Resource Panel and in the processes leading up to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. All Governing Council survey respondents rated UNEP as effective in keeping the world environmental situation under review.

18. Users of UNEP assessments rated them highly for their utility, relevance and timeliness. In particular, the Global Environment Outlook reports, which provide science-based information on the state of the environment, were regarded by key stakeholders as being of high technical quality, unique in the environmental field and a long-standing contribution of the Programme. UNEP has effectively utilized collaborative assessment methods to generate its Global Environment Outlook products; the most recent report brought together more than 600 experts worldwide.

19. The Global Environment Outlook reports have had a direct impact on informing Government policy, as revealed in feedback surveys conducted by UNEP for the third and fourth reports.[6] Prior evaluations have reported that some Governments have adopted the Global Environment Outlook assessment methodology and reporting format for their national environmental strategies.[7] With the fifth report in the series, UNEP further increased the report's utility by producing and distributing specialized and targeted publications to support environmental priority-setting and policymaking.[8] The fifth report played a critical role in providing policymakers with information on emerging issues such as plastics, blue carbon and e-waste.

B. Catalysing and promoting international cooperation and action

UNEP has effectively promoted and catalysed international action on the green economy agenda

20. UNEP has successfully promoted the green economy agenda on the world stage as a primary example of its work to catalyse and promote international action. Although UNEP cannot be credited with the original concept, it spearheaded the Green Economy Initiative as a pilot project. Its flagship report, *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, incorporated scientific research on the implications of green investment in sectors from renewable energy to sustainable agriculture, with strategic guidance on policies that catalyse low-carbon and energy-efficient investments. The report's production and dissemination included intergovernmental and expert discussions and advisory services, which helped to increase the visibility of the green economy approach in global policy discourse. More than one third of Governing Council survey respondents (38 per cent) volunteered that UNEP work on the green economy was its most significant achievement between 2008 and 2011; this was the most frequently cited UNEP achievement on the survey. With UNEP support, more than 30 agencies issued a joint statement on the green economy during the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on

[6] UNEP, Division of Early Warning and Assessment, evaluation report (2006).

[7] UNEP, *Global Environment Outlook: User Profile and Impact Study* (Nairobi, 2004).

[8] These include publications for local government, youth and business, in addition to a summary for policymakers and a publication on keeping track of the changing environment.

Development, in June 2009. In 2010, by its decision SS.XI/9, the Governing Council adopted the Nusa Dua Declaration, in which it noted the green economy approach as a way forward for sustainable development and poverty eradication. The approach was further adopted as a theme of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June 2012, where it found prominent expression in the outcome document. In addition, 87 per cent of Governing Council survey respondents rated UNEP as effective in promoting international action in the environment field.

UNEP progress in promoting the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system has been challenged by unclear and overlapping roles among United Nations entities

21. UNEP has achieved some positive results in implementing its mandate to promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system. Most notably, the Environment Management Group — the main United Nations system-wide coordination body on the environment, chaired by UNEP — has been revitalized in recent years, as evidenced by the increasing number and higher level of meeting participants. Stakeholders appreciated Group outputs such as its report *Working Towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A United Nations System-wide Perspective*, a collaboration between United Nations agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and other intergovernmental bodies, and the "Greening the Blue" initiative, an approach to making the United Nations carbon-neutral.

22. Furthermore, UNEP has a leading role in a number of inter-agency mechanisms and has made useful contributions to the achievement of their goals. UNEP is:

(a) Co-leader, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, of the cluster on renewable energy of UN-Energy;

(b) Deputy coordinator of UN-Oceans;

(c) Lead player in UN-Water;

(d) Co-chair, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), of the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Rio+20.

23. UNEP has increased its engagement with United Nations country teams and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. Since 2007, 57 Frameworks have been completed with active UNEP participation. In 2010-2011, UNEP coordinated more than 48 training sessions to address the lack of capacity on the part of the United Nations country teams to properly integrate environment into their work (out of 139 United Nations country teams worldwide). UNEP also piloted for the first time national environmental summaries[9] in more than 27 countries, which enabled it to more effectively mainstream environmental issues within the United Nations system at the country level.

[9] A national environmental summary supports the incorporation of environment into the United Nations common country assessments/country analysis and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

24. This progress notwithstanding, UNEP has been unable to fully implement its mandate to improve inter-agency coherence and collaboration. With regard to United Nations country team engagement, given the long time frame and resource-intensiveness of the Framework process, the non-resident status of UNEP creates a challenge for the Programme to maintain minimum participation levels and support United Nations coherence and collaboration in the field. Furthermore, there is a general lack of common understanding of United Nations roles and responsibilities relating to the environment. Considerably more respondents to the UNEP staff survey disagreed (47 per cent) than agreed (29 per cent) that there was a shared understanding between UNEP and other United Nations entities regarding what the role of UNEP should be (24 per cent were neutral).

25. Similarly, UNEP stakeholders and member States interviewed and surveyed provided examples of duplication with other United Nations system entities. With regard to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, both organizations see themselves as having been mandated to play a role in respect of science and the environment. With regard to UNDP, a memorandum of understanding notwithstanding, different perceptions existed regarding the role of UNEP at the country level. It should be noted that, to respond to this issue, UNEP is slowly developing a strategic presence policy to determine the size, scope, location and duration of its country interventions. The elaboration of the implementation of this mandate, as defined in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, will add further clarity to this issue.

Partnerships have been fundamental to UNEP in overcoming its institutional limitations and have played a critical role in the delivery of its work programme

26. UNEP partnership activity has intensified.[10] As illustrated in table 1, both the monthly average number of partners and partnership budgets have grown since 2008, although the average budget per new partner has declined by 19 per cent. As costs involved in establishing partnership agreements are basically constant, this suggests that UNEP partnerships are currently less cost-efficient than in 2008-2010. The benefits of partnering with more entities for smaller amounts may outweigh the relative increase in processing cost. UNEP may wish to explore this trend further.

Table 1
UNEP new partnerships from 2008 to 2012

	2008-2010	*October 2011-March 2012*
Monthly average number of new partners	21	70
Monthly average project budget of new partners	More than $1.8 million	$4.8 million
Monthly average budget per new partner	$86 667	$69 885

Source: OIOS audit data.

[10] According to the UNEP partnership policy and procedures, published in 2011, "within the United Nations, partnerships are commonly defined as voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties ... in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task, and to share risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits". The term "partnership" refers to "any alliance, collaboration or association between UNEP and external partners to achieve common goals and objectives".

27. Given its relatively small size, limited resources and sparse country presence, partnerships have been essential for UNEP to enhance its effectiveness. In the 2011 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network assessment of UNEP, 69 per cent of stakeholders rated UNEP as adequate or higher on the extent to which it successfully consulted stakeholder groups. Similarly, more than half of the respondents to the UNEP staff survey (54 per cent) agreed that the Programme successfully entered into partnership arrangements to maximize its reach and programme effectiveness (26 per cent disagreed and 20 per cent were neutral).

28. By partnering with other United Nations entities with a field presence, UNEP gained access to country-based offices and specialized sector expertise. Country-based partners have provided UNEP with access to local knowledge and networks that it might not otherwise have. At the same time, UNEP has contributed its specialized environmental expertise, its access to Governments and its global science-based networks to its partners. Non-governmental organizations specifically appreciated UNEP funding support; provision of cost-free access to environmental information; provision of tools such as for environmental impact assessments; guidance on environmental issues; opportunities for South-South cooperation; and education and awareness-raising campaign support.

29. UNEP has increasingly entered into partnerships with other United Nations entities. Prominent among these is the Poverty-Environment Initiative with UNDP, which is not only a "One United Nations" pilot project, but has been cited by stakeholders as having demonstrated how United Nations agencies work together positively to enhance national capacity for mainstreaming environment in development plans.[11] Other notable examples include the assessment of assessments with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, a main foundation for developing a regular global reporting and assessment process for the marine environment.

30. Nevertheless, partners interviewed identified challenges and risks in the current UNEP partnership model. Partners noted that project time frames were often of short duration, which created uncertainty, in particular for smaller partners. Non-governmental organizations referred to the cumbersome nature of UNEP partnership processes and the need for better and more regular two-way communication and for faster disbursement systems. Partners also mentioned the need for UNEP to give credit to its partners in publications and other media. While UNEP seeks feedback from partners in the context of terminal evaluations of projects, OIOS notes that these are conducted only for all projects above $500,000 and that the feedback appears to focus on project-specific issues rather than on more generally applicable partnership matters. In addition, UNEP does not systematically track partnership cost-efficiency.

31. In October 2011, UNEP promulgated its revised partnership policy and procedures to ensure a consistent, UNEP-wide approach to entering into partnerships. The policy covers due diligence procedures for analysing partner capacities, comparative advantages and cost-efficiency for both non-profit and profit-making partners.

[11] See the report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway by Steve Bass and Yves Renard, published in 2009, and the Multilateral Aid Review undertaken by the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, published in 2011.

C. Providing policy advice and early warning information

UNEP work in its six thematic subprogramme areas has contributed to policy changes and improvements in the environment

32. UNEP has effectively guided regional and national environmental policy formulation and contributed to positive environmental outcomes. Government representatives, research institutions and civil society representatives interviewed reported that UNEP guidance was instrumental in enacting national environmental policy. In addition, 88 per cent of Governing Council survey respondents rated UNEP as effective in providing policy advice on environmental issues based on sound scientific assessments. Table 2 presents several illustrative examples of how UNEP reports and projects have influenced national and regional policies. Key UNEP stakeholders, in interviews and surveys, reported that UNEP contributed to these outcomes through its advice and guidance.

Table 2
Illustrative UNEP contributions to policymaking and environmental outcomes

Thematic area	*Illustrative project/ report*	*Policy outcome*	*Environmental outcome*
Climate change	Project on a strategic framework for the harmonization of energy-efficiency standards for appliances in the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations	Ten States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations signed a strategic framework to reduce emissions from air conditioners	Estimated 3.401 million tons of greenhouse-gas emissions reduced annually
Disasters and conflicts	Report on the environmental assessment of Ogoniland, 2011	Hydrocarbon pollution restoration project for environmental clean-up of the Niger Delta[a]	Total of 100,000 litres of potable water accessible for Nsisioken Ogale community[b] Estimated health improvements and employment opportunities for Ogoni community
Ecosystem management	Report on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity, 2010	Ecosystem and biodiversity studies by Brazil, India, Germany and the European Commission to inform national processes	Too early to track outcome
Environmental governance	Poverty-Environment Initiative (with UNDP), ongoing	Seventeen countries included environmental sustainability in national development policies	National budgets for poverty, environment and waste management increased sixfold in Uruguay and Uganda from 2010 to 2014

Thematic area	*Illustrative project/ report*	*Policy outcome*	*Environmental outcome*
Harmful substances and hazardous waste	Central America and Mexico regional DDT project, 2003-2011	Alternatives to DDT adopted in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama	Total of 200 tons of DDT and other persistent organic pollutants safely disposed of in Mexico and Central America
Resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production	Project on the global green new deal	Total of 3 per cent of gross domestic product allocated to low-emission transport, wind and solar power in China and the Republic of Korea	Total of $454.7 billion allocated to green projects by the Group of 20 since 2008[c]

Source: UNEP annual reports published in 2010 and 2011 (unless otherwise indicated).

[a] UNEP, "UNEP welcomes Nigerian Government's green light for Ogoniland oil clean-up", 1 August 2012. Available from www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2692&ArticleID=9241.

[b] Newsletter about UNEP in Ogoniland, September 2011.

[c] Edward Barbier, "How is the Global Green New Deal going?", *Nature*, vol. 464, No. 7,290 (8 April 2010), pp. 832-833.

33. Some UNEP initiatives, such as the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles and the OzonAction programme supporting the Montreal Protocol, have had a direct impact on improving the state of the environment and human health, as shown in table 3. While there is an inherent challenge in directly attributing these impacts to UNEP, its role has been significant. For example, it has been said that "the phase-out would not have been achieved in anywhere near the same timescale without [UNEP]"[12] and that "the UNEP Clearing House played a critical central coordination role, including management of the Campaign's modest budget and serving as an 'honest broker', while also participating as one of [Partnership's] partners".[13]

Table 3
Global impact measures

Initiative	*Impact*
Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles	– More than 100 countries phased out lead from gasoline – Avoidance of more than 1.2 million premature deaths annually – Estimated economic benefit of $2.45 trillion a year, or around 4 per cent of global gross domestic product

[12] David Todd and Hazel Todd, "Outcome and influence evaluation of the UNEP Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles" (UNEP Evaluation Office, 2010), para. 11, cited in United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles: evaluation of the design and implementation of the lead campaign" (December 2011), exhibit 2.

[13] United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Partnership", p. 50.

Initiative	*Impact*
OzonAction programme (through the Montreal Protocol)	– Global consumption of ozone-depleting substances was reduced by 98 per cent between 1986 and 2010 – Estimated 22 million fewer cases of cataracts in people born between 1985 and 2100 in the United States of America – Estimated 6.3 million fewer skin cancer deaths by 2050 in the United States

Source: Todd and Todd, "Outcome and influence"; Peter L. Tsai and Thomas H. Hatfield, "Global benefits from the phaseout of leaded fuel", *Journal of Environmental Health*, vol. 74, No. 5 (December 2011); UNEP, "World remains on unsustainable track despite hundreds of internationally agreed goals and objectives", 6 June 2012, available from www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2688&ArticleID=9158.

Note: OIOS did not undertake an independent verification of the data reported by UNEP.

D. Facilitating the development, implementation and evolution of norms and standards and developing coherent interlinkages among international environmental conventions

UNEP has been critical to the development of environmental norms and standards, although coordination with multilateral environmental agreements could be strengthened

34. Using its strengths in convening, negotiating and catalysing international action, UNEP has paved the way for the establishment of international frameworks and agreements and helped to facilitate the emergence of environmental norms at the global, regional and national levels. That 75 per cent of Governing Council survey respondents considered UNEP effective in facilitating the development, implementation and evolution of environmental norms and standards provides testimony to this. Recent examples include the facilitation of the global dialogue and negotiation process leading to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the support provided to the negotiations leading to the adoption, in 2010, of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. One of the successes of UNEP most lauded by stakeholders and member States has been its facilitative role in supporting negotiations for a new treaty on the elimination of mercury, which is expected to be adopted late in 2013. UNEP has also responded to member States' priorities by increasing synergy and coherence in decision-making for the conventions relating to chemicals and wastes (the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions) by clustering them under one secretariat. It also launched the United Nations information portal on multilateral environmental agreements (InforMEA), a website bringing together 13 conventions and 18 agreements to share information.

35. UNEP support for Governments to deliver their commitments under various multilateral environmental agreements has been more challenging. Although UNEP established regional focal points in 2010 to support the implementation of convention clusters and consulted multilateral environmental agreements in drafting the medium-

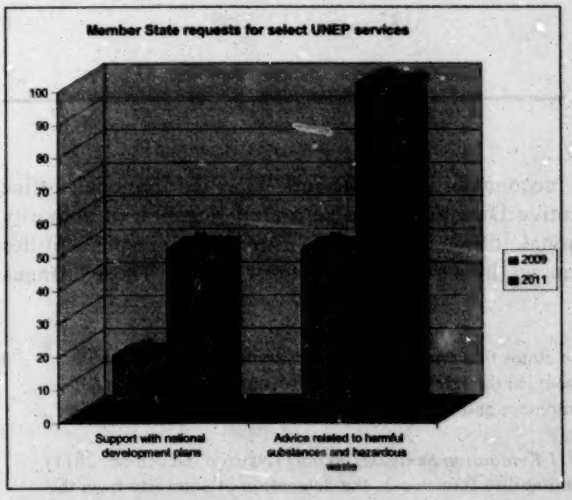
term strategy 2014-2017, several staff interviewed reported that there was unmet demand for provision of more substantive UNEP support to the conventions. Member States noted that UNEP should do more to strengthen its relationship with certain multilateral environmental agreements, in particular those on biodiversity. Multilateral environmental agreement secretariat members interviewed called for more fundraising help, assistance with access to member States, capacity-building and infrastructure support. In 2008, the Joint Inspection Unit highlighted the lack of a clear division of labour between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements (see JIU/REP/2008/3). Upon review of that report and its recommendations, OIOS determined that further assessment of the issue was not needed and that the recommendations, which were still being enacted, should be given time to be fully implemented before giving consideration to further reviewing the issue.

E. Strengthening technology support and capacity in line with country needs and priorities

UNEP has provided valued capacity-development services but has not been adequately strategic in planning for and managing these services

36. Although UNEP has engaged in capacity development since its inception, the 2005 Bali Strategic Plan marked a distinctive step in the evolution of its mandate by introducing capacity-building and technology support as integral to work throughout all priority areas. Demand for this support has grown. Figure III illustrates some examples of this growth. There is no central UNEP database that systematically captures the number of Plan-related requests for assistance or other types of advisory and support requested by partners and member States. Thus, UNEP has no way of identifying the extent and type of demand for such services, making it difficult to make strategic work planning and resource evidence-based decisions in fulfilling this mandate.

Figure III
Requests for select UNEP services



Source: UNEP annual report 2011.

37. An OIOS meta-analysis of UNEP project evaluation reports revealed that all had capacity-building in their design and implementation. Furthermore, member States interviewed reported that they wanted more technology support and highlighted unrealized opportunities for UNEP to build the capacity of developing countries to better provide and manage national data in line with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.[14]

38. Nevertheless, on the basis of the OIOS meta-evaluation, there was mixed evidence regarding the sustainability of capacity built at the country level. Specifically, it highlighted instances where external factors, in particular the lack of national ownership and unfavourable political environments, impeded the achievement of sustainable long-term capacity. According to UNEP management interviews, projects that were based on long-standing national Government relationships have been more sustainable than isolated, ambitious projects undertaken in short time frames with external consultants.[15] Only 36 per cent of Governing Council survey respondents considered UNEP effective in providing technology and capacity development support according to national needs (14 per cent considered it ineffective and 50 per cent were neutral).

F. Cross-cutting issues: regional offices and internal systems

Recent efforts to bolster regional offices notwithstanding, UNEP still has not responded adequately to member States' calls to strengthen these offices

39. UNEP has taken several steps to bolster its regional offices. First, within the context of overall UNEP resource growth of 67 per cent since 2006, regional offices have also grown, as shown in table 4.

Table 4
Growth in UNEP regional office resources

	2006-2007	*2010-2011*	*Percentage increase*
Staff	197	259	31
Non-post resources (millions of United States dollars)	48	77	62

Source: UNEP/GCSS.XII/Add.1.

40. In addition, the 2010 accountability framework clarified regional office responsibilities and the Executive Director signed separate delegation of authority agreements with each regional office director to streamline responsibilities regarding management of financial, human and physical resources.[16] Those changes

[14] Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration states that environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. It also states that States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.

[15] UNEP Evaluation Office, *2010-2011 Evaluation Synthesis Report* (Nairobi, December 2011).

[16] According to the programme accountability framework, the delegation of authority from the Executive Director of UNEP to the regional directors and the survey carried out by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network.

gave the regional offices more discretionary power and programmatic flexibility. A further promising trend emerging from the continuing regional office reform was an organizational effort to better leverage regional knowledge to shape the global positioning and delivery of UNEP. The regional strategies prepared by the regional offices have become one key mechanism through which bottom-up regional knowledge has been passed to inform headquarters strategies.[17] The Division of Regional Cooperation has been more systematically collecting input from the regional offices and using this knowledge to keep UNEP leadership up to date with political and environmental developments in the regions. The regional offices have also become more closely involved in planning and implementing the UNEP work programme.

41. The progress described above notwithstanding, the regional offices have not yet reached their full potential. Significantly, collaboration between the regional offices and headquarters has not been optimal and the integration of a regional perspective into UNEP work and regular knowledge transfer from the field to headquarters has not been achieved. This has been noted as a primary challenge for project implementation.[18] Activities have been undertaken at the country level by headquarters divisions without regional office involvement. Weak collaboration has resulted in part from a lack of shared understanding regarding the UNEP regional and global work programmes and activities.

42. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the regional offices continues to be hampered by several institutional factors. First, 40 new regional office staff (60 per cent) were outposted staff assigned from the divisions to work in the regions. Although they report to regional directors, there has been confusion over functions, roles and budget management since they remain on headquarters division staff lists. Owing to unclear distribution of work between regional staff and outposted division staff, regional work programmes have at times been compartmentalized, making it difficult for the regional offices to function as coherent units. In addition, there were no criteria for when to use global, regional or national programming, and no agreement on which issues would benefit most from a regional approach. UNEP reports that the medium-term strategy 2014-2017 clarifies what parts of the programme of work will be delivered regionally, globally or with a combination of both approaches. It also provides the name of the division accountable for the delivery of a given output and those that are contributing to the delivery, a division of labour that was worked out with the divisions and the regional offices. Project documents also lacked clarity with regard to headquarters and regional office roles and the articulation of reporting lines.[19] Although regional offices have been systematically involved in the UNEP project review committee since 2012, regional office staff reported that they were often consulted too late and not comprehensively enough in the project approval process. A need for closer coordination between headquarters divisions for regional delivery was also frequently mentioned in interviews with staff and stakeholders.

[17] Note by the Executive Director on management arrangements for the implementation of the programme of work 2010-2011.

[18] Formative evaluation of the UNEP programme of work 2010-2011 carried out by the UNEP Evaluation Office in 2011.

[19] Formative evaluation and OIOS meta-analysis of UNEP project evaluation reports.

43. The overarching rationale for strengthening the regional offices has been to bring UNEP normative and scientific work into greater alignment with and closer proximity to national priorities. Furthermore, strengthening the regional offices is critical to the continued relevance and operational effectiveness of UNEP, as reiterated by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/162, adopted in 2010, in which it called for increased support to strengthen the capacities of all UNEP regional offices, and by the Governing Council, which has adopted more than nine decisions in this regard since 1997. Some of the regional offices are strategically co-located in geographical areas that are characterized by a high density of environmental organizations. Accordingly, they can more cost-effectively coordinate and catalyse environmental action than if this was conducted solely from headquarters. As an organization with limited country offices and limited resources, stronger UNEP regional offices can:

(a) Increase visibility;

(b) Enhance cost-effective programme delivery;

(c) Target fundraising;

(d) Strengthen partnership outreach;

(e) Build regional technical capacity;

(f) Achieve economies of scale.

While UNEP programme planning has become more results-oriented, critical processes to support programme implementation have lagged behind

44. UNEP has made progress in developing stronger programme planning and management processes to become a fully results-focused entity. Specifically, UNEP has:

(a) Implemented the Programme Information Management System to link programme output, result and budget information into a single reporting process;

(b) Enhanced the independence of its Evaluation Office and better linked evaluation results with programme planning (according to the medium-term strategy 2014-2017);

(c) Established the Office for Operations and Corporate Services that, through the Quality Assurance Section, monitors the quality of programme implementation while bringing finance, human resources, information technology and resource mobilization under one umbrella;

(d) Increased the results focus in its strategic results framework for the medium-term strategy 2014-2017.

45. Furthermore, the commissioning of internal reports such as the Evaluation Office formative evaluation, the task team report on programme management and implementation of 5 September 2011, and the review of the needs and potential of regional offices (UNEP/GCSS.XII/9/Add.1) demonstrates that the current UNEP leadership values continuous enquiry and reflection for its change management processes.

46. With regard to measuring its own results, however, in the medium-term strategy 2010-2013 the causal linkages between outputs and expected accomplishments were, according to the formative evaluation, largely assumed and

most expected accomplishments were pitched too high to be directly attributable to UNEP interventions. In developing the medium-term strategy 2014-2017, the results of the formative evaluation were taken into account. The subprogramme objectives were formulated more specifically and the expected accomplishments were more directly linked to UNEP outputs.

47. Nevertheless, UNEP reform is continuing and several key processes require attention. In particular, programme focus, organizational accountability and resource allocation criteria have not been adequately institutionalized to support the full implementation of the results-based focus of UNEP.

48. UNEP has not fully responded to the request of the Governing Council, contained in its decisions 24/9 and 25/13, to better prioritize and streamline its operations. While the medium-term strategy 2010-2013 with its six thematic priority areas was a major step forward in focusing the work programme, UNEP continues to regularly undertake scattered, small and often unconnected projects with high logistical costs, in addition to legacy activities that do not directly relate to the six themes. At the end of 2011, 35 of 150 active projects (23 per cent) had not been monitored within the context of the six priority areas; the organizational goal was that 80-90 per cent of projects would be monitored within that context by 2012 (see UNEP/CPR/118/3). Member States interviewed agreed that the work of UNEP was indispensable and of high quality, that the ambitions of UNEP were often not commensurate with its human and financial resources and that, to be more effective, UNEP should focus on doing fewer things better. Staff and stakeholders also acknowledged that, while demand for UNEP work was growing, it risked diluting its impact by spreading itself too thin; they cited the need for greater focus in the work programme. Further institutionalization of the UNEP reform process has resulted in strengthened focus in the medium-term strategy 2014-2017 and the programme of work 2014-2015.

49. Significant improvement in UNEP-wide coordination and communication since introducing the medium-term strategy notwithstanding, a lack of clarity regarding accountability remained. According to the formative evaluation, in 2010-2011, projects continued to be designed within divisions and opportunities for efficiency gains were seldom identified in project or higher-level planning documents. Furthermore, linkages among UNEP divisions and activities were often weak and the role and contribution to organizational projects of units other than the lead division remained unclear. On the basis of minutes of project review committee meetings from January to August 2012, at which the committee discussed six projects, this remains the case. Only three of the six projects involved more than one division and, for another two projects, the committee identified other UNEP divisions or regional offices that could be involved. Furthermore, 39 per cent of UNEP staff survey respondents disagreed and 36 per cent agreed that the UNEP matrix approach to programme management had increased management accountability for programme delivery and resource utilization (the remaining 25 per cent were neutral). In the programme of work 2014-2015, a clear hierarchy of accountability has been established within the UNEP results framework.

50. The introduction of the six cross-cutting priority areas has resulted in a complex web of lead and managing divisions with roles and responsibilities that are continuing to evolve. Although subprogramme coordinators are de facto tasked with coordination, their lack of budgetary authority and the fact that they report to lead

division directors limits their ability to effectively influence programme alignment within the thematic areas. In their capacity to work across divisions, they still have the most detailed information about projects implemented by the division to which they belong, rather than across divisions. They are often marginalized in critical decision-making processes: they are more junior in level than division heads, cannot make direct programmatic suggestions to the Executive Director and some undertake the coordinator role on a part-time basis. New terms of reference for these coordinators were drafted in September 2012 in an attempt to clarify their roles but have not yet been fully implemented.

51. Furthermore, while programme planning happens along thematic areas and cuts across divisions, programme implementation and delivery continue to be led by divisions. Since 2008, to help to align the UNEP activity portfolio with the programme of work, the programme approval group that validates the overall focus and conceptual approach for portfolios of project concepts and the project review committee that examines projects at a more technical level and recommends them for approval by the Deputy Executive Director have been streamlined. An office for operations has been established to enhance the alignment between strategic planning, programme and project review, finance, information and communications technology and human resources. The effectiveness of the Office in overseeing a more holistic coordination of priorities, staff and funding will become more evident in the next programming cycle. It remains to be clarified how these bodies will exert authority vis-à-vis the division heads who lead the thematic subprogrammes. Staff reported that the project approval process had become increasingly demanding and complex with the new structure.

52. The issue previously identified by OIOS and the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network regarding a lack of transparent criteria for allocating funding across activities was also identified in this evaluation.[20] This has created discernable tension among units and branches in the Programme. The UNEP task team found that some divisions had been allocated Environment Fund resources under subprogrammes where they had no outputs to deliver, whereas others were expected to deliver outputs but had not been allocated Fund resources. UNEP reports that steps have been taken to improve its resource allocation process. This involves a review of projects for which funding gaps exist and a prioritization exercise by subprogramme coordinators based on predefined criteria. The task team found that many staff paid from the non-earmarked Fund worked on projects that were not aligned with the resource allocation in the programme of work. UNEP does not systematically assess the cost-effectiveness of its activities, although awareness of the concept is widespread. While staff cite examples of cost-effective work compared with, for example, other international organizations and, overall, a sense of creatively leveraging limited funds by, for example, engaging in partnerships, they also provide examples of what they see as opportunities to use resources more effectively. While the Resource Mobilization Section aims to make fundraising more strategic at the corporate level by successfully presenting donors with a more coherent basket of UNEP needs, it lacks the mandate and capacity to coordinate strategic fundraising at other organizational levels. UNEP has a federated resource mobilization policy, which tasks project managers to raise funds for their activities.[21]

[20] See the OIOS audit report (AA2009/220/01) and the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network report.

[21] This does not mean that resources are automatically earmarked for projects.

V. Conclusion

53. UNEP has performed strongly in the past four years. As evidenced by a 52 per cent increase in voluntary contributions since 2008 and the support that it received for strengthened governance at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, UNEP is clearly appreciated by member States in its role as the principal United Nations body in the environment field. Its relatively small size notwithstanding, UNEP has successfully leveraged its expertise and strategic partnerships to spearhead important environmental efforts such as the Green Economy Initiative, protection of biodiversity and chemicals management. In addition, through numerous smaller-scale initiatives, it has delivered valued policy advice and capacity development to Governments in the South.

54. Given the current state of the global environment, which continues to be threatened by negative trends, the effectiveness of UNEP is more critical than ever. The current framework of international environmental governance is characterized by institutional fragmentation and the lack of a holistic approach to environmental issues, although member States are working to close the growing implementation gap in relation to environmental commitments and obligations under the multilateral environmental agreements. By leveraging its strengths and harnessing internal synergies, UNEP could do more to support national policy development, build capacity for implementing multilateral environmental agreements and catalyse large-scale change at the global level.

55. Internal reform has placed UNEP on the right path towards becoming more results based and collaborative in delivering its work programme. Nevertheless, UNEP needs to further define its role to ensure that it is strategically placed to capitalize on its comparative advantage in a very crowded environmental arena. There is opportunity for UNEP to work further with its key stakeholders to concentrate on areas in which it adds the most value.

56. The normative and operational mandates of UNEP should be discharged in a complementary, mutually supportive and cohesive manner — at the country, regional and global levels — to enhance the Programme's effectiveness. It is at this unique intersection of normative with operational work that UNEP has the potential to make its greatest contribution.

57. The evaluation results show that UNEP has been effective and had a positive impact in the environmental field through its flagship reports, its facilitation of access to timely science-based information on the environment, its contributions to enacting national policy changes and its critical role in developing global norms and standards for the environment. UNEP has been an effective champion for bringing the environment to the forefront of global debate and a strong catalyst for international action. There are, however, opportunities to achieve even greater results, through both programmatic and structural improvements and enhanced efficiencies. The senior leadership of UNEP should continue its current positive path of reform.

VI. Recommendations

58. OIOS makes the five important recommendations set out below.

Recommendation 1 [Evaluation result B]

59. **UNEP should address the partnership gaps identified in the evaluation, taking into account progress made in the partnership policy.** Specifically, it should:

(a) Seek regular and systematic feedback from all partners with which it works on individual projects through the use of a standardized feedback mechanism. UNEP should analyse the responses to distil lessons learned regarding the strengths and weaknesses of its partnership procedures so as to strengthen them;

(b) Implement a mechanism for monitoring partnership cost-efficiency.

Recommendation 2 [Evaluation result E]

60. **UNEP should develop a strategy for enhancing its capacity-building function.** Specifically, it should:

(a) Develop a database to track the number and type of requests for assistance that it receives from member States and other stakeholders;

(b) Using the data from that database, develop a strategic plan for budgeting for and programming capacity-building services based on evidence-based decision-making.

Recommendation 3 [Evaluation result F]

61. **UNEP should further strengthen its regional offices.** Specifically, it should:

(a) Provide regular opportunities for regional office directors to meet the senior management team;

(b) Give regional offices a stronger voice in the project formulation process;

(c) Strengthen cooperation between the Division of Regional Cooperation, the regional offices and divisions;

(d) Further clarify the responsibilities and functions of regional offices and make adjustments in financial and human resources accordingly;

(e) Improve interdivisional cooperation for regional delivery to support regional offices.

Recommendation 4 [Evaluation result F]

62. **UNEP should establish clear and transparent criteria for allocating resources (human and financial) to activities in the thematic priority areas.**

Recommendation 5 [Evaluation result F]

63. **UNEP should finalize and implement the September 2012 draft terms of reference for subprogramme coordinators and, after one year, review the results of the implementation of those terms of reference and make adjustments as needed.**

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

30 January 2013

Annex

Comments received from the United Nations Environment Programme on the programme evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme, contained in a memorandum dated 18 January 2013 from the Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Environment Programme to the Office of Internal Oversight Services[a]

I would like to thank you for the revised report on the programme evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reviewing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of UNEP. The report is comprehensive and thorough, but a few points can be interpreted wrongly, which UNEP would like to raise in the comments below for your consideration.

1. The summary states that UNEP reform is ongoing, and critical processes for programme focus, organizational accountability and resource allocation are lagging (similar comment made in para. 47). This statement is incorrect. UNEP worked with its Committee of Permanent Representatives and other stakeholders over the past biennium to review how best to strengthen its programme focus and organizational accountability. The medium-term strategy 2014-2017 and the programme of work 2014-2015, which have been submitted to the Governing Council for its session in February 2013, have been developed with a strengthened programme focus. These strategic planning documents of the organization include a clear chain of results from output to expected accomplishments to which UNEP can attribute its results. The plan is for all UNEP work — no matter the funding source — to achieve the results in the medium-term strategy and the programme of work, with no projects lying outside this framework of results. Therefore, while it might have been true for the last programme of work period to have not been as focused as possible, further institutionalization of the UNEP reform process has resulted in a much strengthened programme focus.

2. Accountability has also been strengthened by having a clear hierarchy of accountability within the results framework of the organization. Each output in the programme of work 2014-2015 has an accountable division. Accountability for the overall leadership, direction and monitoring of the subprogramme rests with a lead division director. Each of the layers of accountability is measured in the programme performance report, which shows whether UNEP is progressing towards delivery of the outputs and expected accomplishments in the programme of work/medium-term strategy. Accountability for this delivery of results is measured on a six-monthly basis and reviewed at that time by the UNEP senior management team, when management actions are agreed. Please also note that UNEP has already taken steps to improve its resource allocation process. The process involves a review of projects for which there exists a

[a] The Office of Internal Oversight Services herewith presents the full text of comments received from the United Nations Environment Programme on the final draft report on the programme evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme. This practice has been instituted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

funding gap and a prioritization exercise by subprogramme coordinators within each subprogramme basing the prioritization on criteria including the donor's priorities for funding, the value added to the programme of work, the status of project implementation and level of impact potential, among other more thematic priorities. Recommendations are sent to the Office for Operations. Following a review of the projects submitted, the recommendations of subprogramme coordinators and the Office's review of the quality of projects submitted are shared by the Office with the Executive Director.

3. Paragraph 30 states that staff and partners interviewed identified challenges and risks in the current UNEP partnership model; that, according to staff, systematic analyses of partner capacities and comparative advantages are lacking; that UNEP does not systematically track partnership cost efficiency; and that others noted the need for a clear framework to guide how UNEP interacts with different groups of partners, particularly the private sector. Note that UNEP revamped its partnership policy at the end of 2011 and that the new policy has been under implementation in 2012. The policy now covers due diligence procedures for analysing partner capacities, comparative advantages and cost-efficiency for both non-profit and profit-making partners. The statement made in the report was true previously, but has already been addressed with the implementation of the revamped policy in 2012.

4. The conclusion in section F (before para. 39) states that despite recent efforts to bolster regional offices, UNEP still has not responded adequately to member States' calls to strengthen these offices. This conclusion is at odds with the subsequent text, which shows a 30 per cent increase in staffing and a 60 per cent increase in activity funding in the regional offices. The subsequent text also shows that delegations of authority were issued to regional directors, giving them more discretionary powers. The document acknowledges the stronger role of regional offices in developing and implementing the programme of work. Paragraphs 40 and 41 do not take into consideration that UNEP determined when to deliver work globally, regionally or nationally through what were called programme frameworks (i.e. planning documents) that the then UNEP programme approval group determined was the best scope for delivery. Since then, the new medium-term strategy for the period 2014-2017 has been strengthened by clarifying what parts of the programme of work will be delivered regionally, globally or with a combination of both approaches. It also provides the name of the division accountable for delivery of a given output in the programme of work and those that are contributing to the delivery, a division of labour that was worked out with divisions and regional offices. In addition, note in relation to paragraph 42 that regional offices have been systematically involved since 2012 in the UNEP project review committees.

5. Paragraph 50 states that the introduction of the six cross-cutting priority areas has resulted in a complex web of lead and managing divisions where roles and responsibilities are still being clarified. Please note that clarifications have already been made and UNEP now only has the following levels of accountability: those where divisions/regional offices managing projects are accountable (managing divisions), which are often the same ones accountable for the delivery of an output in the programme of work, and those responsible for the subprogramme leadership (lead division directors).

6. Paragraph 50 states that there is no evidence that their (subprogramme coordinators) input has resulted in changes to programming and fundraising decisions; and that the subprogramme coordinators are also marginalized in critical decision-making processes: they are more junior in level than division heads and cannot make direct programmatic suggestions to the Executive Director. This is incorrect. Because of the programme frameworks developed under the coordination of the subprogramme coordinator, projects that did not link to results in the programme of work were not included, thus affecting fundraising decisions. In addition, note that, over the year 2012, the Office for Operations has instilled new procedures that require coordinators to play a central role in prioritizing projects in their respective subprogrammes for corporately sourced funding (e.g. the thematic programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy and the United Nations Development Account). These recommendations are presented to the Executive Director for final decision.

UNEP comments on the specific recommendations

Recommendation 1 [Evaluation result B]

UNEP should address the partnership gaps identified in the evaluation, taking into account progress made in the partnership policy

UNEP agrees with this recommendation, which is consistent with previous OIOS audit findings and has started implementing it. The Inspection and Evaluation Division might wish to take into account the report and conclusions of the second round of OIOS audit on this matter, issued after the current evaluation report, in which the performance of UNEP in the management of partnerships, following recent corporate action taken by the UNEP secretariat, was qualified as fully satisfactory.

Recommendation 2 [Evaluation result E]

UNEP should develop a strategy for enhancing its capacity-building function

UNEP agrees with this recommendation and proposes to implement it in the context of the medium-term strategy 2014-2017, contingent on the availability of funds associated with the strategy.

Recommendation 3 [Evaluation result F]

UNEP should further strengthen its regional offices

UNEP agrees with this recommendation, which is consistent with General Assembly resolution 67/213, noting that the required resources have been requested in the context of the 2014/15 regular budget allocation to UNEP, subject to review and approval by the Fifth Committee.

Recommendation 4 [Evaluation result F]

UNEP should establish clear and transparent criteria for allocating resources (human and financial) to activities in the thematic priority areas

UNEP agrees with this recommendation and is implementing it in the context of resource planning for the programme of work 2014-2015, which is largely based on output-based budgeting. UNEP notes, however, that, while criteria are necessary and put in place, any resource allocation exercise in the United Nations contains an element of "top-down" prioritization, primarily by member States, as well as, to an extent, by the Executive Director.

Recommendation 5 [Evaluation result F]

UNEP should finalize and implement the September 2012 draft terms of reference for subprogramme coordinators and, after one year, review the results of the implementation of those terms of reference and make adjustments as needed

UNEP agrees with this recommendation, which is planned for discussion at a senior management meeting shortly.